

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

IN SUPPORT OF S. 1508—LEGISLATION AIMED AT ENDING THE PARTIAL FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN BY ALLOWING FEDERAL EMPLOYEES TO RETURN TO WORK

HON. THOMAS M. DAVIS

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 27, 1995

Mr. DAVIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the House companion bill to S. 1508—a bill that was approved by the Senate on December 22, 1995, and that would allow all furloughed Federal employees to return to work. This bill enjoys widespread bipartisan support and would save millions of taxpayer dollars while giving Federal employees a legally binding claim to be paid.

S. 1508 is a short bill that simply declares that all Federal employees be deemed to be performing services relating to emergencies involving the safety of human life or protection of property. This "emergency" designation will last through February 1, 1996, and will temporarily circumvent the legal obstacles that require Federal agencies to classify employees as either "excepted from the furlough" or "furloughed" whenever there is a lapse in appropriations without temporary spending legislation enacted. This legislation will meet the demands of taxpayers who want Federal services to be available, as well as Federal employees and contractors who simply want to be able to perform the duties that Congress and the President have assigned them to perform.

S. 1508 will reopen those national parks and museums that remain closed due to the President's veto of the Interior appropriations bill and will make it possible for thousands of Americans to obtain much-needed passports and visas that are currently unavailable due to the President's veto of the State, Justice, and Commerce appropriations bill. Further, many contractors who have now endured a combined 18 days—during the two shutdowns of 1995—without pay will be able to resume work because this legislation allows their contracts to be properly supervised and managed by Federal employees who have been furloughed. Finally, by allowing the remaining 280,000 furloughed workers to return to work,

taxpayers can expect to receive the quality services that they pay for each April 15. Each day that we fail to end this shutdown costs the taxpayers an estimated \$40 million in lost productivity and uncollected user fees and fines.

Unfortunately, S. 1508 is only an incremental step toward achieving pay for the 760,000 Federal workers who currently work for agencies that do not have approved appropriations for fiscal year 1996. On December 20, the Speaker and majority leader pledged to retroactively pay all Federal employees once a balanced budget or continuing resolution is enacted. The measure I am introducing today will give Federal employees an enforceable legal claim to receive pay for services rendered. With the adoption of this measure, Federal workers should be in a stronger position to negotiate with creditors regarding any late payments that are necessitated by the Federal Government's failure to honor its payroll obligations in a timely manner. Further, S. 1508 will also move Congress and the President closer to a full agreement that would fund these agencies and pay for their employees and contractors.

I am committed to working continuously with Members from both parties and with the President to bring an end to this unnecessary, but extremely costly, partial shutdown. The framework for an agreement that would have avoided this impasse was established on November 21, 1995, when the President signed his name to a continuing resolution that endorsed a Federal budget that balances in 7 years according to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office economic forecasts. Today, more than 5 weeks later, the President has still not offered a budget plan that meets the criteria that he agreed to in November. His most recent budget plan was rejected by the House of Representatives by a unanimous and bipartisan 412-to-0 vote.

While concerned taxpayers continue to wait for a good faith effort by the President to offer a balanced budget plan, Congress should act to provide relief to the innocent victims in this dispute—the 760,000 Federal workers and thousands of additional contractors who remain unpaid. By returning furloughed civil servants to work, this bill takes an important step toward the eventual complete retroactive pay for affected Federal workers, and for the resumption of work for contractors and services for taxpayers. I urge my colleagues to

support this bipartisan bill that has already been approved by the other body.

INTRODUCTION OF S. 1508 WHICH WOULD DEEM ALL FEDERAL WORKERS TO BE ESSENTIAL EMPLOYEES

HON. CONSTANCE A. MORELLA

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 27, 1995

Mrs. MORELLA. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join with my colleagues from Virginia, Congressmen TOM DAVIS, FRANK WOLF, and JIM MORAN, to introduce legislation that would deem all Federal workers to be essential employees.

This bill, the House companion to S. 1508, would allow Federal workers to go back to their jobs. If I don't know anything else about Federal workers, I know this: Federal workers across the country and in my district want to work. All week long, I have been getting calls from scientists at the National Institutes of Health [NIH] who are frustrated because they cannot get into their labs. These dedicated Federal workers should not be prevented from working on a cure for cystic fibrosis or for breast cancer. We need these people to be working. They should not be kept from their work for a week; not even for 1 day.

Most importantly, this legislation would eliminate the distinction between "essential" and "nonessential" employees. I cannot think of a term more misleading or misguided than "non-essential." The term must be eliminated from the Federal vocabulary.

We are experiencing the longest Government shutdown in American history. It is a demoralizing and divisive experience for our work force. It is costly and disruptive to the taxpayers. It has hurt businesses in the District of Columbia and elsewhere in the local area.

Clearly, I would have preferred to pass a continuing resolution that would keep the entire Government running.

This bill, which passed the Senate, is an incremental step toward getting Government totally operational again.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.